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The Role of Social Media in the Development of Anxiety in Late Childhood: A Psychologist's Perspective.

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Abstract:
This study examined the impact of social media on anxiety development in late childhood from a psychologist's perspective. The study took a descriptive method, with the researcher administering a self-designed questionnaire on the role of social media in the formation of anxiety in late childhood to a sample of 59 psychologists. The study concluded the following:
According to psychologists, social media has a substantial impact on the development of anxiety in children in late childhood.
Keywords: *social media, anxiety, children, late childhood, and psychologists.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary life is undergoing change in many ways, as the world keeps pace with technological progress accompanied by a population and knowledge explosion. There is a consensus among many researchers that modern communication technology, led by the internet, has ushered in a new era of human communication and interaction, offering users an abundance of information and knowledge. However, there are concerns about the potential negative physical, psychological, social, and cultural effects that modern communication technology may cause.

Social media platforms have become the dominant feature across all spheres of life, as certain features offered by these platformssuch as Facebookhave contributed to their success and widespread adoption. These distinctive features have elevated social media to the status of a medium for socialization; therefore, users must be guided toward optimal use, activation, and benefit from these platforms. Social media has placed humans in constant, real-time connection with global events, effectively condensing the vast world into what is termed the "global village." Undoubtedly, this vast openness to a world full of distinct cultures and diverse civilizations has many negative effects and repercussions, especially if the user is a child, particularly during late childhood. Fear develops in children from one age stage to another; and among the first major triggers of fear in early childhood are sudden loud noises during the child's first year of life, especially when the mother is away from the child. As the child matures, the triggers of fear increase and diversify. From the second to the fifth year, the child may be frightened by strangers, falling from a height, and unfamiliar animals and birds, and may fear the recurrence of painful experiences they have gone through:

- such as medical treatment or surgery
- They also fear what the adults around them fear in their environment because they imitate them; thus, they are influenced by others' fears even if they are not realistic, but rather imaginary or superstitious (Salama, 1987)

Fear is considered one of the most prominent problems of childhood. According to Zidan and Mansour (1982), among the developmental problems of late childhoods are:

A. Academic delay: a socio-educational problem that affects the student and causes distress for parents and teachers at home and at school.

b. Truancy

c. Low self-esteem, d. Fear (Zidan& Mansour, 1982).

Late childhoods is considered one of the most important stages in a person's life, as children at this stage focus on acquiring personal and social skills, and engage in more activities that foster a sense of accomplishment and support a positive self-concept. Furthermore, during this stage, children transition from dependence to independence, developing their own hobbies, activities, and distinct personalities (Abdulkarim, 2011). Late childhood, also known as the third stage of childhood or the preadolescent stage, is the period between the ages of nine and twelve (Mukhtar, 2005).Since this stage of development is crucial to an individual's formation, it corresponds to the elementary school years, which are characterized by emotional thinking—meaning that the child interprets the emotions around them. At this stage, they perceive everything around them through an emotional lens, as their nature remains a mirror reflecting their parents' behavior (Azi, 2002). Accordingly, this study aims to shed light on the role of social media in children's feelings of anxiety during late childhood from the perspective of psychologists.

1.Research Problem:

Social media platforms have opened the floodgates to information and turned the world into a global village where people connect with one another across the globe, While social

media networks have many significant benefits, they also have numerous drawbacks, most notably serious psychological effects, such as a negative impact on mental well-being in general and personality in particular, as they have become a substitute for real, direct interaction with others. as a lack of real-life contact, interaction, and socialization is linked to lower levels of an individual's mental and physical health (Krout et al., 1998), including feelings of anxiety.

The relevance of the current study stems from the widespread prevalence of excessive use of social media among members of Algerian society and the resulting negative effects on mental health. The emergence of these networks has altered individuals' psychological well-being, particularly among children—the group most affected because they are in the early stages of personality development. Hence, the idea for the current study arose to empirically clarify the impact of social media on the level of anxiety among children in late childhood from the perspective of psychologists, as it has become imperative to conduct studies on this vital topic, which has spread at an unprecedented rate in the era of diverse technological advancements.

This will be achieved by addressing the following main question:

- What is the role of social media in the experience of anxiety among children in late childhood, from the perspective of psychologists?

2. Research Hypothesis:

- Social media plays a role in the experience of anxiety among children in late childhood, from the perspective of psychologists.

3. Study Objectives:

- To identify the role of social media in the experience of anxiety among children in late childhood from the perspective of psychologists

4. Significance of the Study:

1 - This study addresses an important phenomenon of the modern era: the use of social media, which has emerged as one of the new technological innovations brought about by tremendous scientific and technological progress.

2 - It highlights the role of social media in the emergence of fears among children in late childhood, which may be useful in developing guidance and counseling programs for children to help them overcome the negative effects of these platforms.

3. It may assist professionals in the psychological and social fields in providing the necessary support to mitigate the negative effects of excessive social media use, guiding users toward positive and effective use, and helping families support their children in overcoming the major challenges brought about by globalization.

4 – The findings of this study can be utilized in designing programs to guide psychologists in fulfilling their roles in a way that protects children from psychological impacts, given the overwhelming prevalence of social media use.

- Scope of the Study:

A – Population:

The study is limited to psychologists in Algeria.

B – Temporal Scope:

The study was conducted during the period from April 19, 2024, to June 9, 2024.

C – Geographical Scope:

The present study was conducted in the city of Oum El Bouaghi, Algeria.

5. Definition of Key Terms:

- ✓ **Social Media:**A system of online networks that allows users to create a personal profile and connect through a social platform, with others who share similar interests, or to connect with friends from college, high school, or other settings. It is also a term used to describe a group of websites on the Internet that emerged with the second generation of the "Web," which facilitates communication among individuals in a virtual community environment that brings them together based on interest groups or networks of affiliation (country, university, company, etc.). All of this is done through direct communication services such as sending messages, viewing others' profiles, and accessing the news and information they choose to share (Jarrar, 2012).

In this study, social media platforms are defined as the networks used by children in the province of Oum El Bouaghi to communicate with others in their various and diverse forms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube…)

- ✓ **Fears:** When defining fears, we encounter a lack of consensus among psychologists and psychological theories regarding the concept of fear. Some distinguish between fear of somethingknown as associative fearand non-associative fear, and there is also neurotic (pathological) fear; therefore, a distinction must be made between normal fear and pathological fear.

Normal fear: This is a state that every person experiences in their daily life when they fear something that is genuinely frightening; that is, it is a real fear or an objective fear of a real danger.

Pathological fear: This is an abnormal, persistent, and recurrent fear involving things that are not usually frightening; the patient does not know the cause, it is not based on reality, and it cannot be controlled, eliminated, or managed (Zahran, 1974).

In this study, fears are procedurally defined as a state of emotions through which children feel discomfort and tension regarding various topics.

- ✓ **Late childhood:** This is a stage of development that begins at ages 6–10 for girls and 6–12 for boys; some consider it to begin at ages 9–12, which roughly corresponds to the elementary school years (Mansour, 1998).

Late childhood is procedurally defined in this study as the stage encompassing children aged 9–11 years.

- ✓ **Psychologist/Therapist:**A psychologist is a professional who has received specialized training in the Department of Psychology at a college of arts and is capable of mastering the skills required to administer psychological and mental tests and to manage the cases presented to them (Karkouch, 2014).

In the present study, a psychologist is defined as a person who has studied clinical psychology at an Algerian university and practices their profession in accordance with their training at institutions or private clinics in the city of Oum El Bouaghi.

II. Field Study Procedures:

- **Research Methodology:**

To test the hypothesis of the present study, a descriptive-analytical approach was used.

- **Study Population:**

The study population consists of a group of practicing psychologists in the province of Oum El Bouaghi.

- **Study Sample:**

The study sample consisted of 59 practicing psychologists at Mohamed Boudiaf Hospital,"HamoudaAamer" Hospital, a health clinic, the rehabilitation center, and private clinics in the province of Oum El Bouaghi, which were selected through purposive sampling.

- **Research Tools:**

Questionnaire on the Role of Social Media in Children's Anxiety in Late Childhood from the Perspective of Psychologists:

Questionnaires are frequently used in descriptive research. A questionnaire is a simple and direct verbal tool designed to identify the characteristics of respondents' experiences and their attitudes toward a specific topic by asking questions that are standardized in terms of order, wording, and similar aspects.

A questionnaire is defined as "a data collection tool that relies on a set of written questions to obtain data useful for addressing a specific problem" (Al-Azwa'i, 2008).

To achieve the study's objectives and collect further data, information, and facts regarding the role of social media in fostering feelings of anxiety among children in late childhood, the researcher developed a questionnaire consisting of 22 items. and the following response options were provided for each item (Always, Sometimes, Rarely), with the following weights assigned to these options (3, 2, 1) respectively (see Appendix No. 01), The researcher carried out the following procedures:

- Reviewed the theoretical literature related to social media, anxiety, and late childhood, and examined studies that addressed this topic directly or indirectly.
- Reviewing previous studies related to the variables of the current study; after constructing the questionnaire, its psychometric properties (validity and reliability) were verified.

To verify the psychometric characteristics of the questionnaire, the researcher administered it to a pilot sample consisting of 30 psychologists in Oum El Bouaghi, Algeria, working in various institutions.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire in the current study were calculated as follows:

- Validity of the questionnaire:

The validity of the questionnaire was calculated using discriminant validity (end-point comparison), where the student took the top 27% of the scale scores and the bottom 27% of the questionnaire scores from the sample consisting of 30 individuals, After arranging these scores in ascending order, two groups were formed, each consisting of 8 individuals (since x0.27 = 8). From this, we take 8 individuals from the upper group and 8 individuals from the

lower group, and then use an appropriate statistical method, namely the t-test, to determine the significance of the difference between them using SPSS 22.0. The results are shown in the following table:

Table No.1: Illustrates the "t" Value for the Significance of the Difference between the Lower Group and the Upper Group in the Questionnaire

Questionnaire	Groups	N	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	"t" Value	SignificanceLevel
	Lower Group	8	77.24	8.26	10.47	0.01 (Significant)
	Upper Group	8	92.68	4.12		

Source: prepared by the researcher

Table 1 show that the t-value is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which means that the questionnaire has the ability to distinguish between the low and high groups; therefore, the questionnaire is considered valid in terms of what it measures.

Reliability of the scale: To determine this, the researcher calculated the questionnaire's reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient,using SPSS 22.0, and obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.778. This coefficient is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that the questionnaire possesses a high degree of reliability.

III. Presentation and Discussion of Results:

Hypothesis: "Social media platforms play a role in children's feelings of anxiety in late childhood from the perspective of psychologists."

To verify this hypothesis, both the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample's responses to the questionnaire on the role of social media in children's feelings of anxiety in late childhood from the perspective of psychologists were calculated.

After statistical analysis using SPSS 22.00, we obtained the results shown in the following table:

Table No. 2: Illustrates the Role of Social Media in Creating Feelings of Fear among Children in Late Childhood from the Perspective of Psychologists

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Yes	No	Rank
1. Social media increases children's fear when being in high places.	4.09	0.18	0.33	3.24	18
2. Social media leads children to feel introverted.	4.04	0.15	1.02	3.18	19
3. Social networking sites contribute to children's isolation.	4.03	0.11	1.00	3.20	20
4. The use of social media leads children to experience trembling.	4.10	0.22	0.29	3.26	16
5. Social media contributes to the emergence of silence among children.	4.09	0.10	0.21	3.66	17
6. Social media plays a major role in children's feelings of fear.	4.15	0.13	0.98	2.31	11
7. Social media increases children's attachment to parents.	4.02	0.25	1.05	3.22	21
8. Social media leads to feelings of tension among	4.16	0.28	1.03	3.55	10

children.					
9. Social media causes children to feel confused.	4.11	0.35	0.99	3.43	15
10. Social media leads children to cry in their dreams.	4.00	0.09	0.22	2.96	22
11. Social media plays a major role in causing children to feel disturbed.	4.19	0.31	0.29	3.66	9
12. Social media leads to distraction of thoughts among children.	4.14	0.29	0.98	2.00	12
13. Social media causes children to fear sleeping alone	4.13	0.25	0.36	2.18	13
14. Social media causes children to fear entering the bathroom.	4.23	0.28	1.20	3.29	8
15. Social media causes children to experience episodes of anger.	4.12	0.27	0.29	3.14	14
16. Social media leads to crying spells among children.	4.28	1.23	0.24	2.36	7
17. Social media causes children to refuse going to school.	4.39	0.78	0.21	2.81	4
18. Social media leads to excessive imagination among children.	4.42	0.75	0.18	3.66	3
19. Social media increases children's fear when being in dark places.	4.85	0.80	0.42	3.21	1
20. Social media causes children to fear people.	4.37	0.76	0.20	3.59	5
21. Social media increases children's fear of mice.	4.48	1.23	0.26	2.22	2
22. Social media causes children to fear cats.	4.33	0.25	0.06	2.26	6
Total score of the statements	4.81	0.93	0.40	3.09	/

Source: prepared by the researcher

Table 2 shows that the average response of the study sample to the questionnaire on the role of social media in feelings of anxiety among children in late childhood, as perceived by psychologists as a whole, was 4.81 , i.e., a moderate level, indicating that social media plays a role in feelings of fear among children in late childhood. Meanwhile, their average responses to the items on the scale ranged from 4.85 to 4.00, with scores varying from low to high.

Paragraph No. (19) received the highest arithmetic mean (4.85), which stated that "social media increases children's fear of being in dark places." In second place was item No. (21) with an arithmetic mean of (4.48), which stated, "Social media leads to increased fear of mice among children," followed by item No. (18) with an arithmetic mean of (4.42), which stated, "Social media leads to increased imagination among children," Fourth place went to paragraph (17) with a mean score of (4.39), which stated that "social media leads to children refusing to go to school," followed by paragraph (20) with a mean score of (4.37), which stated that "social media leads to fear of people among children."

The statements that ranked lowest were statement No. (10) with a mean of (4.00), which stated that "social media causes children to cry in their sleep," and statement No. (07) with a mean of (4.02), which stated that "Social media reduces children's attachment to their parents," and paragraph (02) with a mean score of (4.04), which stated that "social media leads to children feeling withdrawn."

IV. Interpretation and Discussion of Results:

The data obtained by presenting the results related to the study's hypothesiswhich states that social media plays a role in children's feelings of anxiety during late childhood from the perspective of psychologistsand using both arithmetic means and standard deviations, as

shown in Table 2, it is clear that social media unfortunately plays a negative role in the emergence of fears; that is, social media has a significant negative impact on mental health, just like other traditional and new media.

As Table 2 also shows, the responses of the sample participants agree on the negative impact of social media use on mental health, as these platformswhen overused or when users fail to filter the diverse forms of information and ideas presented on their pagescontribute to content that is generally inappropriate for children's age.

What is posted on social media plays a significant role in affecting mental health, particularly given that, according to the study's literature, feelings of anxiety in late childhood are among the most prominent psychological issues these children face; children's fears are a natural phenomenon, at least to a certain extent.

Fear at this stage begins around the age of six and takes the form of imaginary fears, such as fear of ghosts and monsters, fear of injury, fear of school performance, fear of death, or fear of natural disasters.

V. Conclusion:

It is clear from the preceding discussion that social media has a significant negative impact on the emergence of feelings of fear in children during late childhood, according to psychologists, and the findings of the current study confirm this. Given the impact of this type of media on children's feelings of fear, it is therefore crucial to pay attention to children during this age group and the psychological issues they face, most notably the feeling of fear, which increases with the rapid development of technology. The latter is a natural emotional state that manifests in various forms and to varying degrees in children. Some fears benefit the child and help ensure their survival and adaptation. Conversely, there are fears that cause the most harm to the child and can persist throughout their life. Given that late childhood is one of the most critical developmental stages in an individual's lifeupon which their psychological and social well-being is builtit is essential to address the issue of fear in this age group, due to the negative consequences that may act as a destructive element to the child's personality, causing them to emerge from childhood as a troubled and anxious individual suffering from maladjustment, which affects both the individual and society.

Based on the findings of the current study, the following recommendations can be formulated:

1 – The need to take into account the negative impact of social media and propose appropriate solutions to mitigate these effects.

2 – The need to subject the various programs offered on social media platforms to a thorough evaluation in order to address the negative psychological effects children experience.

3 – Efforts should be made to ensure that social media platforms focus on topics related to boosting children's self-confidence and thereby protecting them from feelings of fear.

Finally, we would like to note that this study highlighted an attempt to identify the role of social media in the emergence of fears among children in late childhood, through a field study conducted on a sample of psychologists; and therefore its results are not definitive and require further research and study to better control these variables by improving research conditions, such as applying the tools to a larger sample size to maximize the utility of the results.

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N	Questions	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1	Social media increases children's fear when being in high places.			
2	Social media leads children to feel introverted.			
3	Social networking sites contribute to children's isolation.			
4	The use of social media leads children to experience trembling.			
5	Social media contributes to the emergence of silence among children.			
6	Social media plays a major role in children's feelings of fear.			
7	Social media increases children's attachment to parents.			
8	Social media leads to feelings of tension among children.			
9	Social media causes children to feel confused.			
10	Social media leads children to cry in their dreams.			
11	Social media plays a major role in causing children to feel disturbed.			
12	Social media leads to distraction of thoughts among children.			
13	Social media causes children to fear sleeping alone.			
14	Social media causes children to fear entering the bathroom.			
15	Social media causes children to experience episodes of anger.			
16	Social media leads to crying spells among children.			
17	Social media causes children to refuse going to school.			
18	Social media leads to excessive imagination among children.			
19	Social media increases children's fear when being in dark places.			
20	Social media causes children to fear people.			
21	Social media increases children's fear of mice.			
22	Social media causes children to fear cats.			